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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 12 October 2011, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Haniff ..... (Malaysia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (*continued*)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/66/38, A/66/99, A/66/181, A/66/212 and A/66/215)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/66/211)

1. **Mr. Nepal** (Nepal) said that the advancement of women was Nepal's top socio-economic priority. Woman continued to play an important, well-documented role as change agents in Nepalese society. Almost one third of the members of the Constituent Assembly were women, and thanks to affirmative action, capacity building and empowerment, the number of women in the civil service had grown. Legislation had been enacted to ensure gender equality and prohibit violence and discrimination against women. Women's rights were further protected by an independent judiciary and by the constitutionally established National Human Rights Commission. Nepal had also worked successfully to improve maternal health, with particular emphasis on rural areas. To give rural women better access to education, health care, entrepreneurial capacity building and economic resources and to encourage respect for their right to own property, it had introduced various targeted programmes, including gender-responsive budgeting.

2. Nepal was a party to the 2002 Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and would work to combat that scourge in collaboration with all stakeholders. It was also acting to ensure the safety of Nepalese women employed overseas. However, it would also take coordinated, concerted efforts at the regional and international levels to be able to protect the rights of women migrant workers.

3. **Ms. Yaro** (Burkina Faso) said that her country fully supported the objectives of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and hoped that it would receive adequate funds to fulfil its mandate. Since ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1984, Burkina Faso had taken steps to end discriminatory socio-cultural practices. More girls attended school, and women enjoyed more political rights, as well as better access to microcredit and technology. It had laws promoting women's reproductive health and setting a 30 per cent quota for women in legislative and local elections. To address the problems of rural women, the Government had given various ministries specific budget lines for women's access to income-generating activities and work-saving appropriate technologies such as mills or carts.

4. Burkina Faso celebrated International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women by emphasizing a different area of concern each year and had adopted a zero tolerance plan of action against the practice of female genital mutilation. Her delegation urged the international community to support the African Group's draft resolution to ban that practice worldwide.

5. **Mr. Benmehidi** (Algeria) said that since ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1996, Algeria had amended a wide variety of codes, laws and regulations to eliminate all provisions that discriminated against women and had inserted provisions in its Constitution to promote their political rights. In terms of concrete actions, it had instituted a National Council for Family and Women and was pursuing formal strategies aimed at strengthening women's fundamental civil, political, economic and socio-cultural rights and at improving the country's institutional and technical capacity to prevent and respond to violence and discrimination against women. To aid rural women, it had set up various programmes providing access to literacy and vocational training, as well as to microcredit.

6. Its policies and programmes had produced results. Girls outnumbered boys in school, not only at the primary and secondary levels but also in higher education. Women predominated in the medical, natural and social sciences, both in higher education and in the workforce.

7. **Mr. Hannan** (Bangladesh) said that since electing its first female prime minister in 2009, his country had implemented a wide variety of programmes and projects on behalf of women, including social safety net programmes and public health measures such as the establishment of thousands of community clinics to serve rural, marginal and vulnerable women. Other Government initiatives

included training in income-generating activities, creation of job opportunities for women and establishment of a fund to provide collateral-free loans for women entrepreneurs in small and medium enterprises. It was also making loans available to women for income-generating farm-related activities. In rural areas specifically, women benefited from the Vulnerable Group Development programme, which provided ultra-poor women a vital monthly food ration, and the 'One house, one farm' programme to promote self-reliance, which gave priority to female-headed households. By granting girls a stipend and making secondary education free for them, Bangladesh had been able to achieve and sustain gender parity in school enrolment.

8. In fiscal 2011-2012, the number of ministries adopting a gender-positive budget would increase from 10 to 20. In addition to the Prime Minister, the deputy leader of Parliament, five cabinet ministers and the opposition leader were women, and women had a presence at the policy-making level of the civil service.

9. In closing, he said that he could not overemphasize the need for funding for women's issues in least developed countries such as Bangladesh, which was counting on the support of donors for the necessary resources and on the wisdom of the UN-Women Executive Director for their allocation.

10. **Mr. Balé** (Republic of the Congo) noted the highly symbolic nature of the award of the 2011 Nobel Prize for Peace to three women from developing countries, where women faced the greatest challenges in asserting their rights. To ensure that women enjoyed the rights guaranteed under the Constitution of the Republic and its laws, his Government was working with all stakeholders to develop and implement measures aimed at breaking down cultural stereotypes and building women's capacity to participate fully in all aspects of society. The Republic of the Congo had taken action to improve the living conditions of rural women and their families within the framework of the Interim Post-Conflict Programme. In order to reduce violence against women and especially girls, it had established a violence observatory, created gender focal points in all ministries and, most recently, carried out awareness campaigns on sexual violence within the armed forces and the police. To increase effectiveness, government departments and civil society organizations were coordinating their efforts more closely.

11. He called on all Member States to implement all of the Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security. History would remember that in the Congo, it was women who had paid most dearly for the civil war of the 1990s. It would also remember how much they had contributed to the reestablishment and consolidation of peace.

12. **Ms. Mohamed** (Bahrain) said the establishment of UN-Women would prevent the dispersion of efforts to advance women, a core component of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Bahrain's chief asset for development was its citizens, and the country had long been at the forefront of human resource development in the Arab world. Out of its conviction that women's participation in all areas of society was key, Bahrain had made the empowerment of women a top priority, and Government policy accorded particular attention to supporting women as full partners in society.

13. Women were playing a prominent role in academia, studying abroad or taking part in international conferences. They were increasingly visible as ministers, ambassadors, judges and economic and social professionals. Bahraini women had founded numerous social and educational associations.

14. Over the previous decade, women had made unprecedented strides in political life, with increasing numbers of women being elected at the municipal and parliamentary levels. There were now four women in the lower house of the National Assembly and 11 in the upper house. Bahrain had put in place a national strategy for the advancement of women and had recently submitted its third report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

15. Bahrain fully supported the efforts of all countries to work towards women's advancement and, for its part, would pursue its own endeavours in that regard.

16. **Mr. Apakan** (Turkey) echoed the worldwide sorrow felt at the passing of 2004 Nobel peace laureate Wangari Maathai and said that by honouring Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman for their advocacy of women's rights, the Nobel Committee had underscored the essential role of women in building democracy and lasting peace. He called on the international community to move from words to action on protecting the rights of women and girls in conflict zones. Turkey had made great strides

toward lifting all legal barriers to gender equality, and international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women enjoyed supremacy over national laws. It had also realized most of its Beijing commitments.

17. **Ms. Burgstaller** (Sweden) said that in the 30 years since the entry into force of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, much had been done to promote the rights of women, but much remained to be done. As the Swedish Prime Minister had stressed in his address to the plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 23 September, the largest human rights failure of all was the failure to ensure respect for the political, economic and social rights of women and girls. Gender equality was right politically, morally and economically.

18. Her delegation welcomed the exhaustive, up-to-date general recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Achieving gender equality would require the concerted effort of all. She called particular attention to the need to eliminate stereotypes, including stereotypes regarding a woman's sexual and reproductive life. Women had a right to control over their own bodies, which comprised a right to be free from violence, threat and abuse.

19. **Ms. Myo** (Myanmar) said that her country had drawn up a National Plan for the Advancement of Women 2011-2015 focusing on the areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action. As a first step in preparing its combined fourth and fifth periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, it had conducted three workshops among stakeholders to increase awareness of the conclusions of that Committee with respect to its previous report.

20. The Constitution of Myanmar guaranteed women equal rights before the law, freedom from discrimination and equality in the political arena. Myanmar had 45 women members of Parliament and several women deputy ministers and directors-general, as well as a number of successful woman managing directors in private enterprise.

21. **Ms. Ango-Goze** (Niger) said that following the Fourth World Conference on Women, her country had substantially increased the budget of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and Protection of the Child and had taken action in many areas. Results included reduced maternal mortality, increased enrolment of girls in school and literacy programmes for women.

22. Under the President's Special Anti-Poverty Campaign, almost 150,000 women had received microcredits for income-generating activities, and more than 2,000 had benefited from Operation Dairy Cow. Generalized use of grain mills was helping to reduce women's domestic workload. As a result of a quota law and various other laws and decrees, the percentage of women in the National Assembly had risen to 13 per cent, and the country's highest judicial instance, the Constitutional Court, was headed by a woman.

23. The Niger Criminal Code had been amended to criminalize proxenetism, incitement to immorality, sexual harassment, slavery, rape, and assault and battery. A committee had been established within the Ministry of Justice to combat trafficking in women and children, and the Government, its technical and financial partners, NGOs and civil society organizations were working together to combat violence against women.

24. **Ms. Nordström** (Finland) said that it was essential to approach the challenges of gender equality in democratic governance with an understanding that men and women had different needs. Finland welcomed the expanded political mobilization of women that had taken place during the Arab Spring.

25. Parity in education was a good measure of progress toward attaining Millennium Development Goal 3 (gender equality and empowerment). Unfortunately, school enrolment rates for girls remained much lower than for boys in many parts of the world. Finland's tradition of gender equality allowed women to participate effectively in its economy, making it one of the world's most competitive countries. For developing countries, gender equality was crucial.

26. With respect to inadequate progress on Goal 5 (improving maternal health), the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organization argued that access to modern contraceptives could prevent between 20 and 40 per cent of maternal deaths. Finland used bilateral and multilateral forums to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights, and

it aimed to strengthen the operating capabilities of the organizations active in that area.

27. Women had a crucial role to play in safeguarding scarce natural resources, as well as in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace-building. In support of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), Finland had launched its own national programme to strengthen women's contribution to peace under cooperative agreements with the Governments of Kenya, Afghanistan and, most recently, Nepal.

28. Violence against women was present everywhere, including Finland. In May 2011, her country had been among the first to sign the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which it had helped to bring about.

29. **Mr. Bamba** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that in addition to other actions to promote the advancement of women, his Government would be taking emergency measures to meet the needs created by the post-election crisis. Four of the 11 members of the national reconciliation committee were women, and international, regional and national organizations were working to strengthen women's capacity to participate in the reconciliation and peace-building process.

30. Côte d'Ivoire had ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. In terms of concrete measures, it had carried out public awareness campaigns and educated teachers on the importance of enrolling and keeping girls in school. It has also established a National Council on Violence against Women to oversee counselling centres, establish partnerships with the police and the judiciary, and set up early warning committees in at-risk districts.

31. Côte d'Ivoire systematically prosecuted the persistent practice of female genital mutilation with the support of 454 NGO watchdog committees. In September, it had participated in the international campaign to encourage the United Nations General Assembly to adopt a resolution banning female genital mutilation at its sixty-sixth session.

32. The field was vast and his country's resources, very limited. He called on the international community to increase its technical and financial assistance in order to help Ivorian women throw off the yoke of humiliating practices and age-old stereotypes.

33. **Ms. Shiolashvili** (Georgia) said that her country's recently adopted action plan implementing a 2010 gender equality law targeted education and awareness raising. It also stressed gender analysis of budgeting at all levels, including health care and social security, where particular attention would be given to rural women. Legal guarantees against domestic violence had been strengthened. As a result of its ongoing reforms, Georgia had more women cabinet ministers than ever before, as well as women in vice-ministerial positions in every ministry.

34. In tackling gender-based issues, Georgia gave special attention to the conditions of the most vulnerable groups, including its more than 400,000 internally displaced persons, many of whom were women and girls. It was also a matter of concern that people living in the occupied territories, which were closed to international observers, continued to experience gross, massive, systematic violations of human rights.

35. **Ms. Rasheed** (Maldives) said that it was a pleasure to see so many women address the Committee. Yet if the topic and venue were different, their representation would be minimal.

36. Although the Maldives had attained gender parity at the primary and secondary school levels and boasted a high percentage of women in university-level programmes, social and economic barriers continued to stand in the way of gender equality. In education, the expense of travelling to distant universities prevented many women from continuing their education. Social roadblocks, such as the expectation that women would work on their home islands, tended to keep women out of the country's main economic sectors: tourism, fisheries and construction. Lastly, the rapid rise of a fundamental interpretation of Islam had brought a sharp decline in women's participation on many social issues.

37. The Maldives' first democratically elected Government had taken many initiatives to address de facto and de jure discrimination against women, including the appointment of gender focal points in all ministries and the development of targeted action plans and policies. Forty per cent of Government-sanctioned loans to small and medium-sized enterprises were reserved for women.

38. In closing, she wished to take the opportunity to reiterate her country's invitation to the Special

Rapporteur on violence against women to visit the Maldives.

39. **Mr. Šćepanović** (Montenegro) said that to promote the political empowerment of women, his country's recently enacted electoral law set a minimum quota of 30 per cent women candidates for electoral lists. At the local level, six municipalities had already adopted action plans on gender equality.

40. Montenegro was implementing its 2010 Domestic Violence Act by harmonizing existing regulations, adopting new ones, improving victims' protections, developing a model for preventing and providing protection from domestic violence, and providing psychosocial treatment for perpetrators. A commission was being set up to coordinate, implement, monitor and evaluate the strategy. Montenegro participated in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence Campaign each year.

41. Montenegro's 2013-2017 action plan for gender equality would focus attention on vulnerable groups such as rural, elderly, unemployed, disabled and Roma and Egyptian women. It had a separate action plan for rural women. It was also implementing a number of training programmes to improve women's access to the labour market, particularly in the field of information and communications technology.

42. **Mr. Kohona** (Sri Lanka) said that the World Economic Forum *Global Gender Gap Report 2010* ranked Sri Lanka sixteenth out 318 countries for gender egalitarianism. Since 1948, Sri Lanka had been working to ensure that the rights, freedoms and protections granted to women on paper were observed in practice. It was on track to reach most of the Millennium Development Goals, and there were no gender disparities in any of its achievements.

43. Sri Lanka was making every effort to assist women and children in former conflict zones. Its camps for internally displaced persons had both women's centres and women's protection units with female police officers, and bilateral assistance had been obtained to launch a self-employment programme for war widows.

44. Sri Lanka's Prevention of Domestic Violence Act and implementing action plan strengthened protection mechanisms developed over the years. Its newly launched National Action Plan for the Protection of Human Rights addressed violence against women, women and the criminal justice system, female migrant workers and trafficking in women and children. In recognition of the urgent need for support services for victims of violence, it had worked with NGOs to develop hospital-based centres to provide medical assistance if necessary.

45. Sri Lanka was mindful that, despite its accomplishments, certain disadvantaged and rural segments of the population had made less progress. Changes in certain sensitive areas of women's rights would be made only when they were sought by the communities involved.

46. **Ms. Malenga** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that in view of reference made by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women to the report of seven United Nations experts on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (A/HRC/16/68), she wished to clarify her Government's position. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was firmly committed to respect for women's rights and was convinced that economic and democratic development was possible only with women's participation. It was appalled by the sexual violence against women along its eastern border, but she reminded the Committee that that lawless situation had followed the opening of an ill-protected humanitarian corridor in 1994, at the request of the international community. Her Government had established mobile courts to prosecute such crimes as part of its zero tolerance policy, and in February 2011 the first ever mobile court trial for crimes against humanity had been held, resulting in the conviction of 9 men for the gang rape of 40 women and girls. The success of all of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's efforts for the advancement of women depended on its ability to implement its security and stabilization policy effectively, for which purpose she urged the international community to give its generous support.

47. **Ms. Gunnarsdóttir** (Iceland) encouraged the Government of Yemen to recognize the honour granted to the Yemeni people through the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Tawakkul Karman by giving her and her supporters the opportunity to exercise their freedom of expression and right of peaceful assembly. Her delegation welcomed the part played by women in the Arab Spring and hoped that their participation would bear fruit. In the case of Libya, it strongly encouraged the Secretary-General, his representatives and the

others involved in the stabilization process to comply fully with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in all of their work.

48. Iceland also welcomed the draft resolution on women and political participation put forward by the United States. It was a timely subject and relevant for all Member States. A strong supporter of UN-Women, Iceland had recently adopted a 2011-2014 development strategy in which it was identified as one of four multilateral partners.

49. **Mr. Pham Binh Anh** (Viet Nam) said that the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women were reflected in the laws of Viet Nam, which had also instituted a large number of projects and programmes in the areas of poverty alleviation, job creation, vocational training and education that had a direct, positive impact on women's lives. Viet Nam's strategic guidelines for sustainable development designated women as one of seven priority groups in the promotion of sustainable development.

50. As a result of the above laws, policies and strategies, Vietnam was close to achieving gender parity in school enrolment at the elementary, secondary and tertiary levels. Over 85 per cent of women lived in communities with a health-care worker, and maternal mortality rates had declined considerably. Female workers made up almost half of the workforce, and a growing number held managerial or policymaking positions. Many traditionally male rights, such as land entitlement, were increasingly shared by women. However, despite its high gender-related development index, a gap persisted between policy and practice, and Viet Nam remained strongly committed to doing its utmost to promote the further advancement of women.

51. **Ms. Ivanović** (Serbia) said that her country had expressed an interest in serving on the Executive Board of UN-Women, where its practical experience in cooperating with UN-Women and, before it, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), would be beneficial. During the past decade, Serbia had developed solid strategic, institutional and legal frameworks for promoting gender equality and equity and combating domestic violence, and it was working to implement its laws fully. Additional measures were needed to improve the position and human rights protection of vulnerable groups such as refugee and internally displaced women, Roma women and girls, women with disabilities and rural women.

52. Information and communications technology, a powerful empowerment tool, had the potential to play a major role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. With that in mind, Serbia had collaborated with the International Telecommunication Union to organize the Global Network of Women ICT Decision-Makers, launched in February 2011.

53. **Ms. Mesquita Borges** (Timor-Leste) said that one of the goals of her country's Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 was a gender-fair society. At 29 per cent, Timor-Leste had its region's highest representation rate of women in Parliament. It had recently enacted an electoral law requiring 1 in 3 candidates nominated by a political party to be female with the goal of boosting that rate. Leadership training at the local level was expected to increase the number of women on village councils.

54. Of Timor-Leste's 51 national judges, prosecutors and public defenders, 14 were women. Its laws criminalized most sexual crimes, and it was working to address the oft unreported and stigmatized crimes of gender-based violence. Sensitization and awareness campaigns were conducted in 10 villages each month, and women's centres provided shelter and legal, medical, psychological and social services to women and children.

55. **Mr. Daunivalu** (Fiji) said that it was essential to strengthen UN-Women's regional office in Fiji if it was to work effectively in the Pacific small island developing States. Fiji was implementing gender mainstreaming and had increased welfare assistance to the marginalized, including single mothers. More women were active in rural decision-making bodies, and more were enrolled in tertiary education. Fiji's domestic violence law recognized that family, community and cultural barriers could impede a woman's access to justice.

56. Women had gained more equal access to the labour market, thanks to economic reforms and fairer employment practices, including a national policy on sexual harassment. New legal provisions guaranteed better working conditions for women. Fiji was moving toward its goal of 30 per cent representation of women on government-appointed boards and committees.

57. **Mr. Borg** (Malta) said that his country was implementing gender mainstreaming to supplement its other efforts for the advancement of women. A growing number of people were taking advantage of family-friendly measures that made it easier for persons with family responsibilities to work or study. Almost 60 per cent of students at the University of Malta were female, and employment and university graduation rates for women had risen. Malta's free health care included comprehensive obstetric services, breast screening for women aged 50 to 60 and, within the context of the right to life, sexual and reproductive health care services.

58. The International Institute on Ageing (UN-Malta) had been actively promoting and protecting older women for 23 years and had received international recognition for its key role in implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

59. **Ms. Hernando** (Philippines) said that her delegation was proud of its contribution to shaping the International Labour Organization Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers. However, additional, targeted measures were needed, especially for undocumented women migrant workers. It was also proud to have organized the adoption of Resolution 55/1 on mainstreaming gender equality and empowerment of women in climate change policies and strategies at the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

60. The Republic Act 9710, known as the Magna Carta of Women, protected and promoted the rights of women, especially those in marginalized sectors, such as rural women, informally employed women and older women. It stipulated mandatory training for government personnel dealing with gender-based violence and required a violence-against-women desk in every district. It also provided for affirmative action to increase women's participation and representation in government and in the public and private sectors.

61. **Mr. Ould Cheikh** (Mauritania) said that his country was implementing measures to empower women economically, increase their political participation, boost girls' enrolment in school and improve women's health. Steps had been taken to combat sexual violence, including domestic violence and female genital mutilation (FGM). To raise public awareness of the incompatibility of FGM with the teachings of Islam, campaigns had been conducted with the participation of several imams. A course on FGM had also been developed.

62. Mauritania had improved women's access to employment in urban and rural areas, as well as their access to education, health care, microcredit and income-generating projects. In accordance with a 2007 law on women's representation in the decision-making process, 20 per cent of the Government ministers were women.

63. **Ms. Razouqi** (Kuwait) said that Kuwait's constitution stipulated that all people enjoyed equal rights and duties, regardless of their gender, origin, language or religion. Women had made great strides in the educational and cultural domains in comparison with neighbouring countries. Women's associations campaigned actively for political equality and for greater educational opportunities and participation in the labour market.

64. During the brutal Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, women had volunteered to work in hospitals to compensate for the shortage of medical staff, while others smuggled food, funds and weapons through checkpoints. After the occupation, women had been rewarded for their courageous role with greater participation in public life, taking up a range of high-level professional, political and diplomatic posts and standing for elections.

65. Media campaigns had been organized in order to improve the image of women, and several relevant laws had been adopted. Most recently, a 2011 law provided housing loans and subsidies for Kuwaiti widows and divorced women with children, and guaranteed adequate housing for childless or unmarried women.

66. Kuwait was a party to the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952), the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The country would continue to work with the relevant United Nations entities and encourage international cooperation for the advancement of women.

67. **Mr. Al-Musawi** (Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that while his delegation appreciated the efforts of Kuwait to empower women, it had reservations regarding the phrase "brutal Iraqi occupation". The occupation had been perpetrated by the Saddam regime, of which the Iraqi and Kuwaiti peoples alike had been victims.

The meeting rose at 1:05 p.m.